

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

FRED L. TRUMAN

JUNE 18, 1991

RAYMORE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-1

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4309-4312

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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Fred L. Truman and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2000. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

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## ABSTRACT

Fred L. Truman (May 7, 1915—November 20, 1997), son of J. Vivian and Luella Truman and nephew of Harry S Truman, discusses the Truman family and life on the Truman farm in Grandview, where he spent many years. Truman relates the importance of Harry S Truman as a member of the larger Truman family rather than as a national political figure. Fred Truman tells many stories about various family members and explains the daily and seasonal chores that were performed to maintain a productive farm. He also discusses his service in the Army, a visit to the Truman White House, and visits to Independence.

Persons mentioned: J. Vivian Truman, Luella Campbell Truman, John Curtis Truman, Callie Louise Truman, Callie Campbell, Martha Ann Truman Swoyer, Harry Arnold Truman, Gilbert Vivian Truman, Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, Curtis Campbell, Anna Campbell, John Anderson Truman, Martha E. Truman, Ella Truman Noland, Ethel Noland, Nellie Noland, Eddie Jacobson, Nathan Thomas Veatch, Ernest Bateman Black, Robert Myers, Jim Weaver, Eddie McKim, O. V. Slaughter, John Slaughter, Steve Slaughter, Carrie Nation, Wash Copeland, John J. Strode, Bob Speck, Harrison Young, and Audrey Bradshaw Truman

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
FRED L. TRUMAN**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1991-1

JIM WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Fred Truman. We're in Raymore, Missouri, on June 18, 1991. The interviewer is Jim Williams, a historian from the National Park Service, and the audio technician is Connie Odum-Soper from Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Well, Mr. Truman, what is your full name?

FRED L. TRUMAN: Fred L. Truman.

WILLIAMS: Your middle name is . . . ?

TRUMAN: Leland.

WILLIAMS: Is that a family name?

TRUMAN: Well, I don't know. I think it's an uncle . . . I had an uncle that died pretty young that was named that, but not really a family name, no.

WILLIAMS: Are there any other Freds in the family?

TRUMAN: Only a distant cousin that was named Fred, that I know of. He was down in Texas, and I think he's dead.

WILLIAMS: Could you describe your father for me?

TRUMAN: Well, you've got a picture of him there, but he was a farmer and cattle trader. In fact, he bought some mules quite a ways from home and brought them home and people that were working for us couldn't tell them apart. And when he was at home all the time, he'd look at about seventy or eighty head of cattle and tell you whether one of them was missing or not. So he

really knew his cattle. He used to, when he bought any cattle, he'd go out in the pasture. If the guy priced them by the head, he'd figure them out by the pound and bid by the pound, and vice versa. Something I never got very good at, figuring in my head like he did.

WILLIAMS: What name did he go by?

TRUMAN: Vivian. J. Vivian.

WILLIAMS: I've read that some people called him J.V. Is that right?

TRUMAN: Well, not very many.

WILLIAMS: Mostly Vivian?

TRUMAN: Mostly Vivian, yes.

WILLIAMS: And how would you describe your mother?

TRUMAN: Well, she was fairly heavy, big. Of course, one thing about the parents, you'd ask one of them and [they'd] send you to the other one. You could sass one if the other one didn't hear you, but woe be unto you if you sassed them in hearing.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever do that?

TRUMAN: I've been caught at it, yes. But Mother never learned to drive, but she was one of the best cooks in the country.

WILLIAMS: Oh, really?

TRUMAN: Yes. Of course, one trick Father pulled, he'd sneak off and call Mother and tell her he was bringing three or four people home and not tell them he was bringing them home. Of course, that didn't make too much difference because there was always enough, anyway, for one or two extras. But he would call home before he brought someone out like that.

WILLIAMS: What was your mother's maiden name?

TRUMAN: Campbell. My grandfather was Curtis, Curtis Campbell.

WILLIAMS: Where did they live?

TRUMAN: They lived at Hickman, over on . . . Well, the place was about . . . let's see, it was about a mile north of Ruskin [High School] on the west side of what's now Blue Ridge.

WILLIAMS: I see. So where did your parents meet? Do you know?

TRUMAN: I'm not sure, but Father used to say that when he started home he just wrapped the lines on the buggy and turned the horses loose, and they'd come home. Then his dad would get him up a little earlier the next morning. We always kidded Father that he didn't have to drive home after a date. They were married there at Hickman at the church at Hickman Mills.

WILLIAMS: At Hickman Mills Community Christian?

TRUMAN: Well, it is now Community Christian, yes. It was a Christian church then, the Disciples of Christ.

WILLIAMS: Is that the church you grew up in?

TRUMAN: Well, partially. I was baptized there.

WILLIAMS: So was I. [chuckling]

TRUMAN: Bob Myers baptized me. Have you ever heard him?

WILLIAMS: No, I think he was a little bit before I came along. I may have heard of him.

TRUMAN: Well, that's what I meant, if you had heard him someplace else. I knew he wasn't there then. He was in Europe in the war. He was a medical doctor, too, you know, had a medical degree.

WILLIAMS: Well, I thought the Trumans were all Baptists.

TRUMAN: Well, some of them are, but quite a few of them aren't. No, I went to that Baptist church for a while there when we lived out east of town, east of Grandview, and when we went to there on Blue Ridge, why, we started going back to Hickman, so that's where I was a lot of the time. Of course, I was started out there because we lived there on what we called the Cottingham place, which is about . . . well, it's about a half mile east of the church. You know, the road swings back to the south and then east?

WILLIAMS: Right, yes.

TRUMAN: Well, that's where the place was, in that corner. We lived there about, I think, three or four years.

WILLIAMS: Along what's now Red Bridge Road or Longview Road?

TRUMAN: Well, I think it's Red Bridge Road. Longview Road is the next one south.

WILLIAMS: So that would almost be where Burke School is? So east of the church?

TRUMAN: Well, Ruskin High School is over there on east of it on Blue Ridge.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay. Well, when did you come along into the family?

TRUMAN: In 1915.

WILLIAMS: And where were your parents living then?

TRUMAN: They were living in Belton. I was born in Kansas City, 6033 Swope Parkway.

WILLIAMS: Why were you born in Kansas City?

TRUMAN: That was where my grandfather lived.

WILLIAMS: Were they just there visiting?

TRUMAN: Well, the doctor could go there, and so Mother went in, I think.

WILLIAMS: I see. How long did you live in Belton then?

TRUMAN: I don't know for sure, about a year or two, and then we moved to Grandview, and we were there several years, and then we moved down to Hickman. Then we moved back on Grandview Road, and from there we moved over east of Grandview, what we called the Good place. It's . . . well, I don't know how to describe it, but the . . . well, it's just west of the south end of the lake over there that they built there at Lee's Summit.

WILLIAMS: I see. Yes, I can picture that.

TRUMAN: We lived there about three years and then we moved into that place on Blue Ridge where they . . . well, just north of the Truman house, the Truman home.

WILLIAMS: Why did you move around so much?

TRUMAN: Well, Father decided to move, and so we moved.

WILLIAMS: You weren't involved in the decisions?

TRUMAN: No. Well, he rented the places and moved in.

WILLIAMS: How old was the house that you moved into north of the farm, the Truman farmhouse?

TRUMAN: We built it in 1930.

WILLIAMS: Oh, so you built that?

TRUMAN: Yes, Father had it built.

WILLIAMS: On the family land?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So then how long did you live there?

TRUMAN: Well, I guess you'd say I lived there till 1950, when I got married. But I

was in the Army and here, there, and yonder.

WILLIAMS: What was it like growing up on the farm?

TRUMAN: Work, but it wasn't bad. Of course, there was one year there we plowed corn to the top of those buildings there on Truman Corners, and it was so muddy that the wheels . . . the cultivator wheels dropped clear to the hub when they'd get certain places in it. [chuckling] I know you're not supposed to plow corn like that, but the field south of Mamma Truman's house there, we plowed with breaking plows, one-horse breaking plows. The corn was turning yellow, and Father said, "It's going to die. Plow it." So we went down and . . . one middle and back and through, opened it up so that the corn could breathe.

WILLIAMS: Did it work?

TRUMAN: Yes, but it dried up and didn't raise anything. I think that's the year he sold the whole field for five dollars and never got the five dollars.

WILLIAMS: Oh. Let's talk a little bit about your sister and brothers. The first one was . . . ?

TRUMAN: J.C., John Curtis, and he died a year ago Labor Day.

WILLIAMS: What was he like?

TRUMAN: Oh, he was all right. He had quite a family, of course, but we got along pretty good. Of course, as usual, we fought every once in a while.

WILLIAMS: I have an older brother, too, so . . . Did he have a twin sister?

TRUMAN: Yes, she died when she was about three, I think. I'm not sure.

WILLIAMS: So you never knew her?

TRUMAN: No, not really.

WILLIAMS: And that was Callie?

TRUMAN: Callie Louise. I don't know where the Louise came from, but we had an aunt named Callie, Callie Campbell, but I don't know where the rest of it came from.

WILLIAMS: And then you came along, and then who was next?

TRUMAN: Martha Ann, who is Martha Ann Swoyer, living in Oscaloosa, Kansas.

WILLIAMS: What's she like as a sister?

TRUMAN: Well, we got along pretty good, always did.

WILLIAMS: Did you look out for her?

TRUMAN: Well, somewhat. She could pretty well take care of herself, though.

WILLIAMS: And then who was next?

TRUMAN: Harry, Harry Arnold. He and Gilbert—Gilbert's the youngest—they live down at Louisburg, Kansas.

WILLIAMS: Was Martha Ann named after your grandmother?

TRUMAN: Yes, grandmothers. See, Mamma Campbell was Anna Campbell and Mamma Truman was Martha E. Truman.

WILLIAMS: And what about Harry? Who was he named after?

TRUMAN: Uncle Harry. And Arnold, I'm not sure where that Arnold comes from.

WILLIAMS: And then the youngest one is Gilbert?

TRUMAN: Yes, he was named for a friend and Father.

WILLIAMS: And his middle name is Vivian, you say?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What were those two younger brothers like when you were growing up?

TRUMAN: Well, they were pretty good. They got along fine, always have. In fact,

they married two girls from here at Raymore that were friends. Of course, Gilbert, when Harry went to the service, Gilbert was 1-A or something, or 4-A, or whatever it is, and they wouldn't take him, so he stayed here and traded cattle. [chuckling] Of course, the boys then went together after Harry got home, and they'd go to a sale and somebody would buy-bid a cow. They'd run her up to a certain point. They'd buy-bid them and try to sell them after the sale. They wouldn't take her home if they'd give her to them.

WILLIAMS: So they were more the farmers of the family?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Was there a jokester among you?

TRUMAN: Well, Father was a pretty good jokester. In fact, I was used to that, and it got me in trouble a time or two. I had to back off sometimes to people that could dish it out but couldn't take it. So, once in a while, you have to back off from that, you know?

WILLIAMS: So you were like your father in that way?

TRUMAN: A little bit, yes. Of course, what I always remember about Father is he could tell somebody off and they wouldn't even know it.

WILLIAMS: How is that?

TRUMAN: I don't know, but he did. I'm sure they realized it a day or two later. Of course, that brings up a point when I was in OCS [Officer Candidate School]. I got caught on CQ [in charge of quarters] with dirty ODs [olive drabs], and this captain that was head of the deal had a reputation of being a chewer. I was disappointed. He couldn't hold a candle to anybody.

WILLIAMS: You were used to worse, huh?

TRUMAN: Well, I knew worse, and our TAC [tactical officer] was pretty good at that, but if you'd listen to him, he'd tell you what to do. So you'd listen to him till he told you what to do and then ignore him and go on and do it.

WILLIAMS: What were all those initials you just used in telling that story?

TRUMAN: Which initials?

WILLIAMS: Your OD and your . . . [chuckling]

TRUMAN: Oh, that's your dress uniform, ODs, olive drab, I think it is, I don't know. But TAC is tactical officer. You get in the habit of using some of those and you forget about . . . that other people don't realize what you're talking about sometimes.

WILLIAMS: Well, we're in the government, and we have our own initials, but I didn't recognize those in particular. My father probably would. He was in the Army also. Did you do much hunting around the farm there?

TRUMAN: Some, not a whole lot, but I carried a .22 quite a bit. In fact, I had a bird dog . . . The dogs were running over the place, the reason Father bought me the rifle, and he bought me an automatic, and I'd shoot the first shot to see where it was going and the second shot to hit, so I got so that I didn't depend too much on sights. In fact, I got so I could shoot a chicken through the head with about one out of three shots with the .22, rather than chase them down. [chuckling] Of course, it's getting so now you can't afford to shoot a rifle, it's too dangerous.

WILLIAMS: So you had dogs?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, we had a dog all the time. In fact, we had an Airedale and a collie.

Let's see, it was an Airedale and a collie. Airedale and bird dog was the first set I want to talk about. They got to hunting, and the Airedale would go sit down while the bird dog would do the hunting. When the bird dog pointed the rabbit, the Airedale would go out and head him off. So then we got a collie, and the bird dog taught that collie that, and that bird dog and that collie would catch a jackrabbit. They'd run it into a corner on the fence, a fence corner, and when the rabbit bounced, they had it. If it didn't get through the fence, it was gone. That collie could run as fast downhill as a rabbit could, a jackrabbit could, but the rabbits were generally running uphill, so they could outrun them. But that was quite a sight to watch them hunt. One of the dogs would just sit down while the bird dog hunted.

WILLIAMS: They sound like quite a team.

TRUMAN: Yes, they made quite a team. And then they'd spread out when the jackrabbit got up and run beside . . . They didn't run at the rabbit, they ran beside it to herd it, to keep it going in the right direction to hit the fence.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any cats or other pets?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, we had a bunch of cats at the barn. In fact, I've got a picture of one with . . . When I milked, I squirted milk at his paws, and he lapped it up. He was big. He'd come up and sit down and reach right straight out and scratch me on the knee if I wasn't paying any attention to him.

WILLIAMS: So you'd squirt some milk over in his direction?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did any of those pets ever stay in the house?

TRUMAN: Not really, no. We had an old cat that we'd let in once in a while, but none

that stayed in. Of course, that bird dog I had, I broke him of sucking eggs at home, but he'd go over to my grandmother's and suck eggs.

WILLIAMS: Did she appreciate that?

TRUMAN: Well, he wasn't over there that often, so I don't think she minded too much.

WILLIAMS: And of course you had horses and mules?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, we had quite a few horses and mules. The last team of mules I had, one of them reached up and hooked me with his hind leg and pushed me out of the stall one day.

WILLIAMS: Were you hurt?

TRUMAN: No, he didn't kick me, he just pushed me out of the stall. I was looking at his neck, he had a sore neck. He just reached up and hooked me with his hind leg and pushed me out of the stall. I slapped him on the rear end and walked in and looked at it again, and he didn't do anything. But they were about sixteen hands high and weighed about 1,100 or 1,200 [pounds].

WILLIAMS: Did you use mostly mules in the farming?

TRUMAN: Yes, mostly mules.

WILLIAMS: I think I read you never really had automated machinery.

TRUMAN: We had a tractor, finally, and a combine, yes. The boys had more machinery, but we didn't at home.

WILLIAMS: Harry and Gilbert?

TRUMAN: Yes. They had a lot of machinery.

WILLIAMS: Who was the first one to leave home?

TRUMAN: Well, I guess J.C., and then I left in '40. I left about '40 . . . Well, I went to school quite a bit and was rooming away from home. Then I went to work

for Babcock and Wilcox in '41, and then went to TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority], and then went to the Army and was in the Army three years and a half. I came home and went to work for Black & Veatch. I think they hired me before I ever applied. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: How did that happen?

TRUMAN: Well, N.T. and Father were friends, and so he told N.T. I was coming home, and N.T. told him to have me come by. So, when I went by, why, I think they'd already put me down on the books. At least that's the way the length of service was figured on the deal to get my five-year pin and so forth.

WILLIAMS: Who was N.T.?

TRUMAN: N.T. Veatch.

WILLIAMS: One of the owners?

TRUMAN: Yes, he was one of the partners. He and E.B. Black were the original partners. Well, when I went to work for them, E.B. and N.T. were partners.

WILLIAMS: Why did you decide to be an engineer?

TRUMAN: Oh, I don't know. I just did.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever think about staying on the farm?

TRUMAN: Well, yes, to some extent, but not really.

WILLIAMS: Could you have stayed there?

TRUMAN: Yes, I probably could have.

WILLIAMS: You just wanted something else?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Where did you kids go to school when you were living out there?

TRUMAN: Well, we went to . . . we started out there at that Hickman School on Grandview Road there. What is it, about 115th?

WILLIAMS: It would be north of the farm?

TRUMAN: No. Well, it's right where Longview Road comes up and hits Grandview Road.

WILLIAMS: And that's about a two- or three-room school?

TRUMAN: Well, it was a two-room at that time. I don't know what it is now.

WILLIAMS: That kind of brown-looking thing?

TRUMAN: Yes, it was brick, a brick building. I went there two or three years, and then we changed to Grandview, and I went to Grandview. I think I started in Grandview at the sixth grade and finished high school there, then went to Warrensburg and West Point and George Washington, graduated in engineering from MU [University of Missouri].

WILLIAMS: Why so many schools?

TRUMAN: Just did.

WILLIAMS: How did you get into West Point?

TRUMAN: Well, Uncle Harry got me the appointment.

WILLIAMS: Is that when he was a senator?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you like it there?

TRUMAN: Well, I got along, but I didn't get along good enough. English and French got me. In fact, I dropped a hundred files in math studying for the exams on French and English.

WILLIAMS: That's too bad.

TRUMAN: Well, one of those things.

WILLIAMS: And you graduated from MU?

TRUMAN: MU, yes.

WILLIAMS: You didn't volunteer for the Army, did you?

TRUMAN: Well, not exactly. No, I was drafted.

WILLIAMS: Did you enjoy the Army?

TRUMAN: Not really, but I did go to OCS, came out a second lieutenant. Then I was in the reserves a while, and when it got to the point where I had to apply for promotion as though I'd never been in the Army, I decided it was time to get out.

WILLIAMS: Was anyone else in the family in the service during the war?

TRUMAN: J.C. was in the Navy. He was on the battleship *Missouri*, and Harry was in . . . I've forgotten what the outfit was, but he was in the Battle of the Bulge.

WILLIAMS: In the Army?

TRUMAN: Army and .155-millimeter howitzers, I think, was his outfit.

WILLIAMS: What did your Uncle Harry think of your service?

TRUMAN: I don't know. He never said much about it, that I know of.

WILLIAMS: He never told Army stories?

TRUMAN: Oh, *he* did, yes. Yes, he and . . . Especially . . . what's the guy from Nebraska? Eddie McKim. They used to sit there in the office and argue about who did what, when. Of course, then he always told the story of the Battle of Who Run. You've probably heard that, haven't you?

WILLIAMS: I may have, but why don't you repeat it so we have it on tape.

TRUMAN: Well, apparently it seems that they were supposedly a long ways from the

front. They were going up towards the front, and a shell hit right in the middle of them and exploded. Everybody ran but Uncle Harry and I think a buck private or two and maybe a corporal. Even his first sergeant ran. Uncle Harry said he was afraid to run. [chuckling] Then one guy said, "God damn, I swallowed my chew!" So they got them all back together, and then Uncle Harry finally said he had to bust his first sergeant, but he went to another outfit and made good. So that's the Battle of Who Run.

WILLIAMS: How much did he talk about World War I?

TRUMAN: Oh, not too much. He had his maps on the office wall up there at the library. Basically, when somebody, one of his soldiers came in . . . of course, he had a pretty good memory for names and people. When he was running for senator, he ran into a fellow down in south Missouri that had been in his outfit. The guy walked up to him and said, "I bet you don't know my name." He said, "No, I can't recall it, but you were a gunner on number three cannon." So I think he could name more people going by him than anybody in the country, probably.

WILLIAMS: That's handy when you're a politician.

TRUMAN: It's handy anytime. I sure haven't developed it.

WILLIAMS: No, I haven't either. Who were some of your neighbors around the farm there?

TRUMAN: Oh, I don't know. [chuckling] Babcocks lived over there where the high school is now at Hickman, and then there was an orchard just south of us there across Red Bridge Road, and Weavers lived there west of the place, and I used to play with Jim Weaver. Of course, he died when I was pretty

young. I think I was about five or six when he died. We were pretty close then.

WILLIAMS: How much did you visit with the neighbors?

TRUMAN: Well, this Jim Weaver and I played together all the time. Of course, threshing crews went around, you know. Slaughters lived . . . The Slaughter place was just east of us there.

WILLIAMS: Was that John Slaughter?

TRUMAN: John was one of them, yes. His dad was Enos, I think, or O.V., O.V. Slaughter.

WILLIAMS: They're from Hickman Mills Church, too.

TRUMAN: Yes, O.V., and one of the fellows lived here and died this spring. What . . . ?

WILLIAMS: I think that was Steve, right?

TRUMAN: Steve, yes. That was Steve.

WILLIAMS: I knew Steve.

TRUMAN: Yes, of course, Uncle Harrison, which was Mamma Truman's brother, and I've forgotten . . . I don't know which one of the Slaughters used to shoot dogs and throw them over the fence so they were on the other property, if they, you know, were bothering the cattle or something. Well, I don't know, I think the gun, that double-barreled muzzle loader that's in the . . . I believe it's in the library, it was Uncle Harrison's. It's had a stock broken on it, and I think his horse he called Mr. Anderson, fell on it.

WILLIAMS: And broke the stock?

TRUMAN: Yes. And apparently it messed up one of the hammers on the gun because this nephew of mine was looking at it and said, "Well, the hammers are

different.” So I think a blacksmith made it the second time.

WILLIAMS: I think we need to pause and change tapes.

[End #4309; Begin #4310]

WILLIAMS: Okay.

TRUMAN: [chuckling] Well, it looks like it’s running.

WILLIAMS: Which grandparents do you remember?

TRUMAN: Oh, both of them, all of them. Well, all but my Papa Truman [John Anderson Truman]. I don’t remember him.

WILLIAMS: He died several years before you were born?

TRUMAN: No, I think he died about the time I was born. I’m not sure just when it was. Other than that, I remember all of them.

WILLIAMS: What was Mamma Truman like?

TRUMAN: Well, she was a little bit feisty. She was pretty positive about a lot of things. Of course, she was there . . . She went on that Order No. 11, you know, so she had pretty much opinions on things, but that didn’t last.

WILLIAMS: Was she a good grandmother?

TRUMAN: Yes. Of course, she taught us to shoot when she was about seventy-five. By the way, her 16-gauge double is there in the Truman house.

WILLIAMS: Oh, on display?

TRUMAN: Well, I don’t know that it’s on display, but it’s there. I saw it there. There was a gun there, and I checked it out, and it’s hers.

WILLIAMS: So she was a good marksman?

TRUMAN: Yes, she could pick a bird out of the tallest tree out there.

WILLIAMS: Did you say she was pretty feisty?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, she was. I guess you'd call it that, but she kept up pretty well on what was going on.

WILLIAMS: Did she ever tell you stories about the old days?

TRUMAN: Oh, a little bit. Not too much.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember any of those?

TRUMAN: No, not really. Of course, she went to school north of the river someplace, I think, and I think I gave her Bible to the library, but I'm not sure.

WILLIAMS: Did they ever talk about when they lived in Independence?

TRUMAN: Not too much. Some, but . . . See, Uncle Harry always wore the glasses, and Father more or less took care of him and stood up for him. Father had a team of goats that he drove at that time when they were kids, I think, but Uncle Harry, I guess, read everything in sight.

WILLIAMS: What do you do with a team of goats?

TRUMAN: Drove them. To a wagon. I don't know just how much, but . . . I've seen that goat harness. I don't know where it is now, whether it's still in existence or not.

WILLIAMS: They're not quite the same as mules, though, are they?

TRUMAN: A little bit smarter. I don't think they're as easy to train.

WILLIAMS: I wouldn't think so.

TRUMAN: One thing about a mule, they've got a good memory. If you break a mule to plow corn one year, you don't have to teach it to him the next year. He knows. A horse, you have to retrain him a little, most of them.

WILLIAMS: So mules really are smarter than horses?

TRUMAN: I think they are. The smartest mule I ever saw was on the stage. It was a

little mule. It weighed about 700 or 800. He came driving him out in one of these little medicine carts. When it got on the stage, the thing fell apart, the shafts flipped up. The guy started to lead that mule off the stage, and he got behind him and pushed him. That mule would kick and flip his pants, just like that. The guy couldn't lead him. He started to push him, and the mule sat down on him. And when he got through, he just walked off and that mule followed him off. He was trained, I mean to tell you.

WILLIAMS: Did you have much trouble with your mules?

TRUMAN: No. We had a mule or two that would run, had a mule or two that were balky, but . . .

WILLIAMS: I heard something about . . . did you call it "shooting craps," or what's that expression?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, shooting craps, when one pulls and then the other. But they'll do that once in a while if you don't sit down on them, hold them in. But if you want a team of mules to pull, you get on the lines and drag your feet, let them lift you along with the load. Of course, this team I was talking about, the one of them that pushed me out of a stall, I broke them to pull pulling posts. I'd hang the lines on the Hames and tell them to hit it. If the post shook, why, I'd get those lines and hold them tight and tell them to hit it, and they'd move it out. Well, later, my younger brother was mowing on a railroad right-of-way and the Pittman rod on the mower hit a rail that was driven into the ground, and they stopped before they broke it. They cracked it. He backed them up and mowed until noon, then went to town and got a new Pittman rod. But I'd hook them to a tree and tell them to hit it, and

they'd do it. But when it didn't move, they'd stop, but they'd hit it again.  
So it didn't bother them a bit.

WILLIAMS: I think your grandmother used to say that your Uncle Harry learned good sense on the farm.

TRUMAN: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Would you say that about you, too?

TRUMAN: Well, I don't know about that, but I learned a few things on there. Father said Uncle Harry had the best team in the country to work with. No wonder he could plow . . . line out a straight furrow.

WILLIAMS: What was the busiest time of year for you on the farm?

TRUMAN: Oh, summertime. Haying and one thing and another. But I never got too good at loading. Father loaded bundles with a short-handled fork. The trick was he didn't handle all the bundles. He'd just build up the edges and kick the others in the center. So, when he went down here to a place west of Harrisonville called Amarugia, [Missouri]—at that time he was the only man that lived in Amarugia—everybody else would say it started at the other side of the fence. He went down there, and he told them he was from Kansas City. When threshing time came up, he had a team of mules that he didn't have to drive to the next shock. They'd just go on. So one of those boys thought they'd cover him up. He waited till it got up to where he had to pitch pretty high and told him to bring him more. [chuckling] So that guy wouldn't go out with him anymore. But he really could load on the bundle wagon. I taught Harry more or less the same way. They had some light oats, and I'd throw him half a shock or so, and he did that. One of the

boys from school thought he'd cover him up, too. He didn't make it.

WILLIAMS: Did you have much time for recreation?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, we had quite a bit of time.

WILLIAMS: What would you do for fun?

TRUMAN: Oh, corn cob fights, and hunt, go swimming, and go skating in the wintertime.

WILLIAMS: Where was there water around?

TRUMAN: Oh, there was a pond or two over east over there . . . well, it'd be east of that Lee's Summit lake now. I don't know whether it's part of the lake or not, but it might have been. [tape is turned off]

WILLIAMS: You were living on the Good place then?

TRUMAN: Yes. Of course, I had a horse all the time, and John J. Strode and I used to ride together a lot. Of course, when we lived down there at Hickman we had that horse we called Speck. Father bought him from Bob Speck. Well, originally I could climb up his leg and get on him. Then I got a little bigger than that, and I couldn't make it, so I'd wait till he started grazing and get on his head, and when he lifted up, I'd slide down his neck and get on him that way. But he was a running/walking horse. He wasn't like these walking horses now. He ran and walked. These confounded so-called walking horses, I wouldn't have one of them, as far as riding them is concerned. But they have to pump their head, and this old horse you'd just turn him loose. If you got him a mile from home, he'd hit that running walk. We rode him from Grandview there on the Grandview Road down to Jaudon leading two or three mules. We turned the mules into a pen down

there at Jaudon. Do you know where that is?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't.

TRUMAN: Well, it's about three miles west of here and a mile and a half or two miles . . . about two miles south. And we'd ride him down there, turn those mules loose and watch them fight for an hour or two and then ride back home and be home by noon. The other horses would trot and lope to keep up with that Speck horse. He was a real horse. Of course, then Father had a horse he called June. And when he lived down here at Amarugia and Mamma Truman had an operation, he put that horse on a buggy and drove from Amarugia, which is down west of Harrisonville a couple miles, to Grandview. I think it took him three hours.

WILLIAMS: That's a pretty quick trip.

TRUMAN: [chuckling] He said he put that mare in the barn and didn't expect her to come out. Didn't hurt her a bit. I've seen that mare. He sold her to a family that lived west of us there. She went to high school there at Hickman, and I've seen her come around that road there through Hickman at a dead run, running along the edge of the pavement, and I mean that mare was running. She was a good mare.

WILLIAMS: It sounds like your father knew how to pick the livestock.

TRUMAN: Yes, he did. He knew his livestock pretty well.

WILLIAMS: Were there many community events, socials or anything like that?

TRUMAN: Oh, I guess there were quite a few, but not too many, really.

WILLIAMS: So it was mostly just having fun with your family and a few neighbors?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: When did they get electricity out there on the farm? Do you know?

TRUMAN: Well, let's see, I don't remember whether we had it on that Good place or not. Let's see, we had it . . . [chuckling] That's a good question. We didn't have it at Hickman. We had an icebox there on Grandview Road, so maybe we didn't have it there either. I'm not sure. Then when we moved over to that Good place . . . No, we didn't have it over there either because they wanted too much to run it the half-mile back from the road when the line went down the road there, which is . . . I'm not sure just how it sits up with that road that runs in there now. It was approximately there, but it was about a quarter of a mile from the house, and they wanted so much to run it in, but we couldn't afford it. And then when we got back over there on Blue Ridge, Father cut a deal with Kansas City Power and Light to let them run a line across the place to give us service. So they ran it from Grandview Road back into the house and ran the high line through there. That was in Missouri Public Service territory, but to get that right-of-way through there, why, they arranged to hook us in. So we were on Kansas City Power and Light.

WILLIAMS: Otherwise you may not have had power?

TRUMAN: I don't think we had power until then, but I'm not positive.

WILLIAMS: Do you know any stories about your Grandfather Truman?

TRUMAN: No, not really. Well, yes, he was a trader. He used to go up to the square there in Independence and trade horses. He traded thirteen times and rode the same horse home. [chuckling] That's the take that I've been told.

WILLIAMS: Did he make any money that day?

TRUMAN: I don't know, but I don't think he would lose much that day. He rode the same horse . . . I think he traded for thirteen horses and rode the same horse home.

WILLIAMS: That's pretty good.

TRUMAN: Yes, that's the deal.

WILLIAMS: So it sounds like your father took after your grandfather more than the other ones.

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did your Grandmother Truman ever scold you or get onto you much?

TRUMAN: No, not really. We were more or less on our good behavior over there.

WILLIAMS: What did you like about visiting her?

TRUMAN: Well, when I was yay high, why, I'd go over there and stay all night with her, and she'd make all kinds of shadows on the wall, various animals, geese and ducks and one thing and another. Her birthday was the twenty-fifth of November, so then we had a birthday and Thanksgiving dinner there.

WILLIAMS: Mine's on the twenty-third, so we usually do about the same for me.

TRUMAN: Uncle Harry usually carved the turkey, regardless of what Margaret says.

WILLIAMS: Where did you get the turkey?

TRUMAN: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: You didn't go hunt it or . . . ?

TRUMAN: No, I didn't supply the turkey, but Uncle Harry did the carving. Of course, he carved left-handed. He was left-handed.

WILLIAMS: Who was usually there on those holidays?

TRUMAN: Well, Mamma Truman and Aunt Mary. I think Bess was there part of the time. Our family were there.

WILLIAMS: So was this just about every Thanksgiving?

TRUMAN: For quite a while, yes.

WILLIAMS: Even when he was a senator, would he come home?

TRUMAN: I think. I'm not sure. He might have made it a time or two while he was senator. Of course, that kind of made it a little unhandy for that deal.

WILLIAMS: But he was there most every year while he was living over in Independence?

TRUMAN: Yes, I think so.

WILLIAMS: And Bess and Margaret would come sometimes?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: But not every time?

TRUMAN: I'm not sure whether they did or not, come every time, but I think they came part of the time at least.

WILLIAMS: How much were they out in Grandview there at the farm?

TRUMAN: Who? Aunt Bess?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

TRUMAN: Not a whole lot. Not a whole lot.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember any particular occasion?

TRUMAN: No. No.

WILLIAMS: Because there seems to be a question about how much they were invited out or decided to come out to visit that side of the family.

TRUMAN: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Do you think Bess liked to go out into the country, I guess is . . .

TRUMAN: I don't know about that. Of course, her friends were all there in Independence. Card-playing group and church and everything was there in Independence.

WILLIAMS: Well, what's your first memory of your Uncle Harry?

TRUMAN: Beats me. That's getting a little bit back in history, and I wouldn't know what the first one was.

WILLIAMS: He would have been already in Independence by the time you would remember, probably.

TRUMAN: Well, yes. See, I was born in '15. He came back in . . .

WILLIAMS: In '19.

TRUMAN: In '19, so I'd have been about four years old when he came back to the States. And then he went to Independence, I think, and worked . . . Well, he and Eddie Jacobson started that store, so . . .

WILLIAMS: What kind of uncle was he when you were a small boy?

TRUMAN: Well, we didn't see too much of him, really. Of course, then when he was on the court there in Jackson County, why, we'd go in with Father once in a while and be there when he was there.

WILLIAMS: Over in the Independence courthouse?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Were you impressed?

TRUMAN: Well, not too much. I don't get impressed very easily, never have.

WILLIAMS: Even when your uncle's the president or county judge?

TRUMAN: Yes, that's right.

WILLIAMS: Did things change much when he was elected to the senate?

TRUMAN: Not too much, no, except it was a little further over there.

WILLIAMS: Did you help him in his political career at all, campaign or anything?

TRUMAN: No, not really. I used to drive once in a while in an election. But that's another thing, you know, they used to know people and know how they were going to vote. And old Doc Brennan there in Grandview would sit outside the polls and keep track of who went in and who came out. He'd write it down, and he was within 1 percent of the actual count at the end of the day on that precinct. And one guy came . . . [doorbell rings—interview interrupted—tape is turned off]

WILLIAMS: I forget what we were talking about, but I think it was about your Uncle Harry. Well, let's just go on. You said that he had the best team in the county?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did your father, was that your father's doing?

TRUMAN: No, Father had a pretty good set of horses, too. But speaking of that, you know, when the boys got a tractor, they had one with road gear in it. Somebody told Father they were driving it awful fast. He said, "You know, I can't even drive that thing." [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, we've heard that when Harry was away to the war that your Aunt Mary ran the farm.

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did your father help much?

TRUMAN: I don't think so. Aunt Mary didn't particularly want it, but she more or less

took care of that part of it, yes. See, Father was, I guess, living in Hickman at that time, farming that place down there in Hickman, which was, I think, couple of hundred acres—I'm not sure just how much it was. He was farming down there and . . . Or wait a minute, what . . . I can't keep track of where that was in time.

WILLIAMS: What did your grandmother do during all of this farming period?

TRUMAN: Oh, she stayed there at home and did the cooking and stuff.

WILLIAMS: Was she a good cook?

TRUMAN: Yes, she was a pretty good cook. [chuckling] In fact, she made a coffeecake that everybody wanted her recipe for. So she gave Mother the recipe. Mother tried to make it. It wasn't worth nothing. So Martha Ann went over and watched Mamma Truman make it. She used three different sized cups. [chuckling] She hadn't bothered to mention that to Mother. [chuckling] So Mother finally got the recipe and did a pretty good job of it, but it wasn't like Mamma Truman's. I don't know what the difference is, but . . .

WILLIAMS: How much were your other set of grandparents around, the Campbells?

TRUMAN: Quite a little bit. They lived down there in Kansas City at 6033 Swope Parkway, and I rode a horse down there from Hickman a time or two. I stayed down there with them a little bit.

WILLIAMS: So they were city people?

TRUMAN: Well, he had moved to town, yes, but they were originally out there at Ruskin, but they finally moved into town.

WILLIAMS: Did they come out to the farm much?

TRUMAN: Mamma Campbell did after Papa Campbell was gone. Mamma Campbell had Callie. In fact, they stayed in the house there on that Good place for one summer, but they generally stayed in the apartment building in the wintertime there in Kansas City.

WILLIAMS: Your Grandmother Truman's house, did it have indoor plumbing and electricity?

TRUMAN: Not then. I think in . . . well, in the fifties or sixties I think they put in a bathroom. When Harry was married, I think they put in a bathroom there. But no, Mamma Truman never had indoor plumbing. A well right there at the door, you know.

WILLIAMS: So I assume there was an outhouse somewhere.

TRUMAN: Yes, there was an outhouse. There was a smokehouse there just at the gate, when you went out to go to . . . Where that garage is, there used to be a smokehouse there.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe your Aunt Mary?

TRUMAN: Well, she was always pretty active. Of course, she stayed at home and took care of Mamma Truman all the time. She was pretty active in the Eastern Star.

WILLIAMS: Did you get involved in the Masons?

TRUMAN: Yes, I joined the Masons and even went through Shrine, but I'm just dues-paying is all now.

WILLIAMS: Was your father involved?

TRUMAN: Yes, he was master of the lodge up there at Grandview one year. In fact, he and Uncle Harry were charter members of it, and I think they belonged in

Belton for a while when they moved out there and started that lodge.

WILLIAMS: Was that expected of you children to get involved?

TRUMAN: Well, not really, but they wanted us to. Of course, they didn't push it.

WILLIAMS: So about what age did you start that?

TRUMAN: Twenty-seven or eight, or something, six, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: This was while you were living there on the farm?

TRUMAN: Well, yes. Let's see, while I was in school at MU, so it would have been in the late twenties or early thirties.

WILLIAMS: Were all of your brothers and your sister involved, too?

TRUMAN: Martha Ann joined the Eastern Star, I think, and Harry started in the lodge and never did get through it.

WILLIAMS: We need to pause again for tapes.

[End #4310; Begin #4311]

WILLIAMS: Why do you think the lodge is so important in your family?

TRUMAN: I don't really know, but I've been quite active in it. Uncle Harry, of course, was grand master of the lodge in Missouri.

WILLIAMS: When you were in the Army, he was a senator, and then vice president, then president?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did that ever cause you any aggravation?

TRUMAN: Not really. No, not really.

WILLIAMS: Did people make the connection usually?

TRUMAN: Well, some of them did once in a while, but not always.

WILLIAMS: No one ever gave you extra trouble?

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: Was there any other problem with being the nephew of the president?

TRUMAN: No, not really.

WILLIAMS: Were there any benefits?

TRUMAN: Oh, there might have been, but I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever get to visit the White House?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes. Yes, we slept in Lincoln's bed. That was Uncle Harry's joke on the family. But he couldn't get Mamma Truman in there.

WILLIAMS: Why is that?

TRUMAN: Oh, she was a rebel, unmitigated rebel.

WILLIAMS: Did she talk much about the War between the States?

TRUMAN: Not excessively. Once in a while she'd say something about it. One story she tells is that some Yankee woman had a mockingbird, and they taught the mockingbird to whistle "Dixie." [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: But you never doubted which side she was for?

TRUMAN: Oh, no.

WILLIAMS: We've heard the story about your Uncle Harry coming back to the farm with his Army uniform, and she didn't care for that. Did you ever hear that?

TRUMAN: I've heard it, yes, but secondhand.

WILLIAMS: He never told you that story?

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: What did you think of the White House?

TRUMAN: It's quite a place.

WILLIAMS: Did you get special treatment?

TRUMAN: Well, the day we went up there, it was so foggy that we couldn't leave on time. In fact, we didn't even leave on the airplane we were scheduled to leave. I think it was a Martin, a smaller plane. It lit a couple of times between here and Chicago. When we hit Chicago, they pulled us, my wife and I, off, grabbed our baggage, put us on a bus and took us over to the other plane. They had waited a few minutes for us, and we got on, and they took off. Just as soon as we got on, they took off. It was snowing when we went through . . . I think it was Philadelphia, I believe—I'm not sure, in Pennsylvania someplace—and we were at treetop level before you could see the ground. That was one of those four-motor prop planes. We pulled up to the station there. I don't think he even cut off the engines. Two or three people got off, they put on two or three more, and that guy just bent the throttles back and took off. I think he had a date in Washington. But I mean he really took out of there. He was afraid he was going to get stuck. When we got to Washington, I started hunting my baggage and a fellow came up and said, "Are you Fred, Mr. Truman?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I've got your baggage." [chuckling] So the Secret Service had already collected our baggage. He took us back to the White House.

A thing happened there that you might be interested in. One night at supper, they served dessert, and they missed me. They failed to serve me the dessert. [chuckling] So I told Uncle Harry, and he rang for them, and they came back and gave me my dessert.

WILLIAMS: Do you like desserts?

TRUMAN: Well, yes, I do.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember what kind of food it was?

TRUMAN: No, I don't. I know one meal they had raw oysters.

WILLIAMS: Do you care for those?

TRUMAN: It doesn't excite me very much. I wouldn't touch one anymore.

WILLIAMS: Well, how many times were you at the White House?

TRUMAN: Just the one weekend.

WILLIAMS: What year would that have been? In the forties or fifties?

TRUMAN: It was just after they rebuilt the White House, so I'm not sure just when it was.

WILLIAMS: Well, when were you married?

TRUMAN: '50. October 27, 1950.

WILLIAMS: And you met your wife here in Kansas City?

TRUMAN: Yes, a friend of mine in Lee's Summit introduced us.

WILLIAMS: What did she think of marrying the nephew of the president?

TRUMAN: I don't know. I don't think that impressed her very much.

WILLIAMS: That's not why she married you.

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: And her name was Audrey?

TRUMAN: Audrey Bradshaw, yes.

WILLIAMS: Had you known her very long before you were married?

TRUMAN: Oh, a little over a year, or two, I don't know. I'm not sure just how long it was.

WILLIAMS: So she knew what she was getting into with all of you Trumans?

TRUMAN: Yes, I think so.

WILLIAMS: Did you have children?

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: If you had to compare your father and your uncle and your aunt, how they were alike and how they were different, could you do that?

TRUMAN: No, not really.

WILLIAMS: Your Uncle Harry was the studious one?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Your father was a good horse trader, apparently. Could you see something similar running through all of them?

TRUMAN: Well, I never gave it any thought. No, not really.

WILLIAMS: How did they get along with each other?

TRUMAN: Got along fine.

WILLIAMS: Did they help each other out through the years?

TRUMAN: I think, yes. Yes, they did.

WILLIAMS: Of course, we have a lot of people that think the president was wealthy. We try to convince them that he really wasn't until later on.

TRUMAN: Well, I don't think even later on he was too wealthy. But of course, with the pension that he got, he was comfortable, let's put it that way. But up until then, I don't think you could say he was even comfortable.

WILLIAMS: Did your father also work for the government at one time?

TRUMAN: Yes, he was head of the FHA [Federal Housing Administration] here for a while, and then he was purchasing agent for the county for a while, too, and he was a road overseer before that for quite a little while. In fact, he had

pulled a beam out of a wooden beam road plow, and he took it back to the shop over there, and the county couldn't believe that he had a team that would do that. So they gave him another one, and he proceeded to pull that out. So the county gave him a steel beamed one. [chuckling] We had a guy working for us that could fight one of those things and put it in the ground, named Wash Copeland. Well, I think there was seven mules and one horse on that crew. Old Pete horse that would . . . when you started, he'd set it and make the other horse start it. But yes, they had a pretty good pulling outfit.

WILLIAMS: What do you know about the financial problems that led to the foreclosure on the farm?

TRUMAN: Not much. Not much.

WILLIAMS: You were still around at that time?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes. And when we got it back, they wouldn't sell it to Father. He had to have somebody buy it for him.

WILLIAMS: The people that had bought it from the county?

TRUMAN: Well, actually, I don't know the details of it, but somebody bought it and promptly deeded it to Father.

WILLIAMS: Why wouldn't they sell it to your father?

TRUMAN: I don't know, but . . . one of those things.

WILLIAMS: When did you get it back?

TRUMAN: I'm not sure. It must have been in the late twenties, because we built the house there. Well, I don't know. I don't know when it was.

WILLIAMS: And were you involved at all in the sale of the land for the shopping center

[Truman Corners Shopping Center]?

TRUMAN: No. No.

WILLIAMS: By that time you were moved.

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you live in Kansas City after you were married?

TRUMAN: Well, yes, we lived there in Independence for a while when we were first married.

WILLIAMS: Where in Independence?

TRUMAN: [chuckling] I don't remember where it was. It was Miss Proctor was the boardinghouse where Audrey was living, and we moved in there for a while. Then we got an apartment there on the Plaza, 410 West Forty-seventh, I think it was. We lived there until we moved over on South Benton. We lived there until '63 when we built this house over in Prairie Village, and then, after Audrey died, I moved out here.

WILLIAMS: Your grandmother and Aunt Mary had to move to another house, is that right?

TRUMAN: Yes, they moved up to Grandview. Then Mamma Truman fell up there and broke her hip. In fact, she broke . . . I think it was the second or third time that she broke it when she died.

WILLIAMS: Did all of your family get to go to the White House at one time or another?

TRUMAN: I think they have.

WILLIAMS: Were you invited, or . . .

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you just suggest it to them?

TRUMAN: No, we were asked to come. Of course, while they were rebuilding it they kind of delayed the trip a little bit, so it was a good deal while they were rebuilding it.

WILLIAMS: I think I read that your Uncle Harry pinned your bars on you when you were commissioned.

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Where was that at?

TRUMAN: Fort Belvoir.

WILLIAMS: And that's when he'd been a senator then or . . . ?

TRUMAN: He was vice president then.

WILLIAMS: Did you arrange that?

TRUMAN: No, I didn't do any arranging.

WILLIAMS: He did all the arranging?

TRUMAN: Yes, he did the arranging. There's a couple of pictures of me washing the cans there that day. That was staged, but I had done that a time or two there. In fact, when I got on KP before I got there, I generally got asked. If I had any choice, I generally got the garbage rack. That was the best part of . . . the easiest part of KP was the garbage rack. At that time I smoked a pipe, and you didn't have to sneak around or go outside or something to smoke. You were already out there.

WILLIAMS: So you'd rather do that than peel potatoes?

TRUMAN: Yes. I peeled a few of them, too.

WILLIAMS: You never went overseas in the Army, is that right?

TRUMAN: The only time I was where I could even volunteer to go overseas was after

the war was over. I wasn't about to volunteer then. I was a place or two I would have if it would have done any good. Of course, I got poison ivy out there in California. A funny thing, it started on this heel down here under my combat boots. You know, combat boots are about nine inches tall, and it broke out in my heel, just behind the bone here. Of course, they don't know how to cure poison ivy, and they gave me a bunch of vaccinations, and this arm swelled up and filled the shirt sleeve. So they stuck me in the hospital and put calamine lotion on me and kept me in there where it was air-conditioned for about a week till it kind of cured up. And while I was in there, they sent a bunch of them overseas that I'd been working with. [chuckling] So I don't know, that might have kept me from going.

WILLIAMS: When he was president, how often did he come to Grandview and visit your grandmother and your father?

TRUMAN: I don't know. He came several times.

WILLIAMS: Were you ever around for those visits?

TRUMAN: Well, not really, because I was in the Army most of the time. Let's see, wait a minute. I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Did you have much dealings with the Secret Service?

TRUMAN: No, none.

WILLIAMS: Were they there at your grandmother's?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did she get along well with them?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, they had a pretty nice group that worked there. Yes, they were a nice group, and Mamma Truman got along fine with them.

WILLIAMS: How often did you visit the Truman home in Independence?

TRUMAN: Not very often. A few times.

WILLIAMS: Why would you usually go over there?

TRUMAN: Oh, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Just to visit?

TRUMAN: Yes, just to visit.

WILLIAMS: Did they ever have holiday gatherings or anything like that there?

TRUMAN: I don't remember that, no.

WILLIAMS: Did you go to the dedication of the [Truman] Library?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And to the reception afterwards?

TRUMAN: I think so, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did your grandmother or your father or aunt, did they go out to Independence much?

TRUMAN: Well, of course, Father worked for the county, so he was over there all the time, every day or two.

WILLIAMS: Did he, to your knowledge, drop by the house much?

TRUMAN: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: And your grandmother, did she mingle much with the Wallaces, for instance?

TRUMAN: Not that I know of. Not too much. Some but not a whole lot.

WILLIAMS: It seems like the families didn't mix very much. Do you know why that was?

TRUMAN: No. Different groups of friends and so forth, mainly, I think.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Wallaces much at all?

TRUMAN: Not really. No, I've met them, and that's about all. [gap in tape]

WILLIAMS: What did you think of your Aunt Bess?

TRUMAN: She was all right. She was an excellent driver, and she saw what was going on around her.

WILLIAMS: What do you mean by that?

TRUMAN: Well, she'd look every direction, saw what was going on. She was an excellent driver. A pretty good cook, too.

WILLIAMS: Really?

TRUMAN: Yes. Of course, they had a good woman working for them that was a good cook, too.

WILLIAMS: How much did you visit with them by telephone, if you didn't . . .

TRUMAN: Not much.

WILLIAMS: Would you get Christmas cards or . . . ?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did they attend your wedding, anything like that?

TRUMAN: I think so. I don't know.

WILLIAMS: I read somewhere that there was a party in Grandview the night of the '48 election. Would you have been around?

TRUMAN: Forty-eight? I don't know.

WILLIAMS: At someplace called Macon's?

TRUMAN: I didn't attend it.

WILLIAMS: I think I read that your father was an organizer or something. It was in a barn or something.

TRUMAN: I never heard of it. I don't know anything about it.

WILLIAMS: So you weren't there celebrating the election victory, huh?

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: What struck you about the house there on Delaware Street when you were in it, anything in particular?

TRUMAN: No. No. [telephone rings—interview interrupted]

WILLIAMS: Do you ever remember going upstairs in that house?

TRUMAN: I've been upstairs in it, but I don't remember much about it at all.

WILLIAMS: There's not too many people we talk to who ever got upstairs.

TRUMAN: I've been up there, but I don't remember . . .

WILLIAMS: Just to look around?

TRUMAN: I've forgotten what it was for. I went up there for some reason or other.  
[caller's message regarding fishing plays on answering machine]

TRUMAN: So I can go fishing by myself this afternoon.

WILLIAMS: So you're a fisherman, huh?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Out here on the pond?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I hear there are some pretty good fish in there.

TRUMAN: They've got some grass carp in there. There's six of them about that long.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you throw them back. [chuckling]

TRUMAN: Well, grass carp I would, although they say that . . . One of the maintenance men here said that somebody caught them, absconded with them, and they had to get some more once in a while.

WILLIAMS: I don't know what you'd do with those. [chuckling]

TRUMAN: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Grind them up for fertilizer or something. But that house out there must have seemed quite a bit different than the farmhouse out here.

TRUMAN: Well, it's a little different, yes, but it's still a house.

WILLIAMS: Yes, people these days are surprised that it's not fancier than it is.

TRUMAN: Well, look at how old it is.

WILLIAMS: How well did you know, or how well do you know your cousin Margaret?

TRUMAN: Not too well. She was out there some but not too much.

WILLIAMS: Would she go out and play with the rest of you all?

TRUMAN: Not really, no. We were out there on the farm, and she wasn't farm material in particular.

WILLIAMS: So she stayed indoors or just watched?

TRUMAN: Well, yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, they said that Bess was something of a tomboy growing up.

TRUMAN: Yes, that's what they tell me.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever get any sense of that when she would be out there on the farm?

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: She wouldn't go out with Mamma Truman and shoot or anything?

TRUMAN: Not that I know of.

WILLIAMS: Well, I suppose you were at the funerals for both your Aunt Bess and Uncle Harry?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you have to be invited to both of those?

TRUMAN: Yes, we did. They had the list on it.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any role in either one?

TRUMAN: No, not really.

WILLIAMS: What did you think of the state funeral for your uncle?

TRUMAN: Well, it was all right, but I still think they should have shipped him back to Washington.

WILLIAMS: To lie in state?

TRUMAN: Yes. He owed that to the people. Margaret owed that to the people to have that done, in my opinion.

WILLIAMS: So she was the one who decided not to do that?

TRUMAN: Yes, yes, I think so. I really think that he should have been sent back to Washington to lay in state.

WILLIAMS: Well, I've heard that he's the only one not to have done that.

TRUMAN: Well . . .

WILLIAMS: And Bess's funeral was not quite as grand?

TRUMAN: No, it was really a nice funeral. There in the church. It was a nice funeral.

WILLIAMS: How often do you communicate with Margaret these days?

TRUMAN: I don't. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Not at all?

TRUMAN: No, I haven't.

WILLIAMS: No Christmas cards or anything?

TRUMAN: No.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'm kind of curious, for someone with the name like Truman, how

you feel when you drive around Jackson County and see so many things named Truman.

TRUMAN: Well, there's one down here, this Truman Drive should be Feland Drive.

WILLIAMS: Feland?

TRUMAN: Yes, Feland, because it's on the Feland place. It runs across the Feland place there. They've got Truman Road and Martha E. Truman Road and gone kind of nuts on that.

WILLIAMS: Now there's even the Truman Bank.

TRUMAN: Yes, well, that was the Grandview . . . Well, originally, I think it was the Grandview Farmers' Bank. In fact, I had an account there. The funny thing about that, the last check I wrote on that account, you know where they cashed it? Plaza Bank of Commerce. [chuckling] I had a little trouble getting that thing balanced out to close out the account at Grandview because the check never showed up. I finally found it in the Plaza Bank.  
[chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So Feland, is that . . . ?

TRUMAN: Feland, yes.

WILLIAMS: How would you spell that?

TRUMAN: F-E-L-A-N-D, I think.

WILLIAMS: So they had a farm just south of yours?

TRUMAN: Yes, that was the farm south of us.

WILLIAMS: Do people still ask you if you're related?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, once in a while.

WILLIAMS: When they see your name?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What about your brother Harry? Does he . . . ?

TRUMAN: I don't know. I imagine he gets a little more than I do.

WILLIAMS: I think that would be an interesting name to explain to people. What would you like to see happen to the farm home now?

TRUMAN: Well, it's going pretty good, I think.

WILLIAMS: Were you involved at all in the restoration?

TRUMAN: No. Well, they did ask me some questions about what it was and one thing and another like that, and I tried to help them on that. I think they got it back pretty good. Of course, that chicken house out there, you know, the northeast of the house, that's the original chicken house. And that garage there is, it's about to fall down—of course, it always has been. But of course, the house there, you know, the original house burned.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I've read that.

TRUMAN: A servant girl was filling a lamp or a lantern, didn't put the flame out in it, spilled some kerosene, and it caught fire. Uncle Harrison thought he had it put out with a blanket, and then it flared up again, so they lost it. I think Margaret's got the only piece of furniture that survived, and that's a little doll cabinet, dresser type of deal. I think she's got that, but that's the only piece of furniture that survived. Of course, they claim that they've got an original bedstead that belonged to Papa Truman and Mamma Truman down at that . . . oh, where is the house down south where Uncle Harry was born?

WILLIAMS: Oh, in Lamar?

TRUMAN: Yes, isn't it Lamar? I doubt it. The period, yes, but otherwise I doubt it very seriously.

WILLIAMS: Because it would have been burned up?

TRUMAN: No, no.

WILLIAMS: Why do you doubt it?

TRUMAN: Well, how are they going to find it?

WILLIAMS: They can't prove it, huh?

TRUMAN: No, but period, yes. It's probably the period.

WILLIAMS: You knew your Uncle Harrison?

TRUMAN: No. No, by reputation only, but that was quite a reputation.

WILLIAMS: Can you talk about him a little bit? That's your grandmother's brother?

TRUMAN: My grandmother's brother, yes. Well, they hung him three times trying to get him to tell where his father was.

WILLIAMS: During the war?

TRUMAN: During the Civil War. Of course, he was, I think, about six-foot-two or -three, weighed around 200 pounds, and pretty stout, too, as far as that goes. They say he used to go down there to that restaurant . . . What's the one that burned down there in town? What is it? Anyhow, they used to bring him a cup that was cracked so he'd give them a cussing. [chuckling] He blew cigar smoke in Carrie Nation's face.

WILLIAMS: Oh, really? Well, we have to change [the tape].

CONNIE ODUM-SOPER: Oh, rats! Write down Carrie Nation. I want to hear this one.

[chuckling]

[End #4311; Begin #4312]

TRUMAN: I was saying old Harrison blew smoke in Carrie Nation's face, cigar smoke that is, and he knew what would happen. The thing was, Carrie didn't recognize him, and she grabbed the cigar out of his mouth, threw it down. He told her, "You wouldn't do that if you knew who I was."

WILLIAMS: Who did he think he was?

TRUMAN: Well, if she had known who he was. Because I think . . .

WILLIAMS: Was he pretty famous?

TRUMAN: No, no, but Carrie, I think, knew the family some way. I don't know about that.

WILLIAMS: I see.

TRUMAN: But you were talking about jokers in the family. I think he was the original, one of the original jokers.

WILLIAMS: Well, your uncle had a pretty good sense of humor, didn't he?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, in the future, what would you like people to remember about your uncle, the president?

TRUMAN: Well, I think they got a pretty good deal on it. He had to make decisions, and he did make them. But I know several people that are pretty happy that he made the decision to drop that [atomic] bomb, because they were scheduled to go. A couple of them, friends there in the church, that told me they were scheduled to hit the island. They were sure glad he did that, that they feel like they're here because he did. And I think, really, that there would have been a lot more Japanese killed than that bomb ever killed had they invaded.

WILLIAMS: Well, you know the county has asked the federal government to take over the operation of the farm home?

TRUMAN: Oh, have they?

WILLIAMS: Because the county says they don't have the resources, I guess, to keep it up. What do you think of that idea?

TRUMAN: Well, they either ought to keep it up or tear it down, one or the other.

WILLIAMS: When did the other house come down?

TRUMAN: Which one?

WILLIAMS: The one north of . . .

TRUMAN: It didn't. It's there in Grandview.

WILLIAMS: They moved it?

TRUMAN: Yes, they moved it.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I didn't know that.

TRUMAN: Yes, it's there in . . . Do you know where it is? Yes, I've been by it. It's sitting there on . . . well, it's backed up to a parking lot there, but I'm not sure just . . . I can find it, but I can't tell you where it is.

ODUM-SOPER: Down by the depot.

TRUMAN: Hmm?

ODUM-SOPER: Down by the depot.

TRUMAN: No.

ODUM-SOPER: Oh, I thought it was.

TRUMAN: No, it's . . . Well, let's see, it's east of Grandview Road about a quarter of a mile, and it's about two blocks south of Duck Road. I'm not sure where it is, but I could find it. It's right in that area. I think it's about the second or

third street west of [Highway] 71.

WILLIAMS: Did they move that when they built that little shopping center?

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So that's been recently.

TRUMAN: Well, yes, I don't remember just when it was.

WILLIAMS: Five or so years ago.

TRUMAN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, for people visiting the farm and wanting to learn more about your family as well as your uncle, is there anything that you'd like to tell them, or as they leave, a lesson that they should learn?

TRUMAN: Well, they've got several pieces of furniture there, a few pieces of furniture there that are from the family. Most of them are just period furniture that is really authentic, you know, area, for that time deals, but there isn't much of the furniture in existence, really.

WILLIAMS: Connie, do you have questions?

ODUM-SOPER: Oh, I have a few questions, a couple about the furniture. The ladies who used to give tours there talk about a chair, a rocking chair in the sitting room, that was in the house that burned, that your grandmother used it and rocked in it during the Civil War. No? Okay.

TRUMAN: I don't think so.

ODUM-SOPER: Also, being a woman, I suppose, did your grandmother . . . Do you remember the kitchen at all growing up?

TRUMAN: Yes.

ODUM-SOPER: Did she have a big old iron stove that she used to cook on?

TRUMAN: Well, it was a regular kitchen wood-burning range, you know, with a water  
...

ODUM-SOPER: Lift out?

TRUMAN: No, with a water reservoir on one side, you know? I think it had a warming  
oven above it and an oven, a big oven, you know, in the front like.

ODUM-SOPER: She had an icebox, I suppose, and an ice man?

TRUMAN: Surely did. She didn't have electricity. [chuckling]

ODUM-SOPER: Indeed. One of my favorite memories growing up is the ice man  
with a great big block of ice and his tongs, bringing it in like this.

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, on his back.

ODUM-SOPER: The kitchen itself as they have it now is not very large.

TRUMAN: That's right.

ODUM-SOPER: So I'm guessing that the farmhands and family and everybody ate  
every meal in the dining room, right?

TRUMAN: Well, yes.

ODUM-SOPER: That was just tradition back then. Nobody much ate in their  
kitchens, did they?

TRUMAN: Well, there wasn't enough room.

ODUM-SOPER: No, the kitchen was for cooking. It wasn't for eating.

TRUMAN: That kitchen is about like it was.

ODUM-SOPER: It is?

TRUMAN: Yes, it's pretty close, and even to that chimney that's sticking up.

ODUM-SOPER: Good. There are lots of good stories, too, about your grandmother's  
... no, your Uncle Harry's Noland cousins coming down. I'm wondering

if when you all went to Independence, rather than maybe stay at the Wallace house, you stayed with the Nolands.

TRUMAN: We didn't stay.

ODUM-SOPER: You didn't? You just visited?

TRUMAN: We didn't stay. We just visited, yes.

ODUM-SOPER: Because that was family, Truman family across the street, wasn't it?

TRUMAN: Yes, yes, Nolands. Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you know them very well?

TRUMAN: Not too well. I knew them, yes.

WILLIAMS: Who Harry called Aunt Ella?

TRUMAN: Yes, well, that was . . . Aunt Ella was Ethel and Nellie's mother, I believe.

WILLIAMS: That was John Truman's sister. Is that right?

TRUMAN: Beats me.

WILLIAMS: I think that's the way it goes.

ODUM-SOPER: And my last question is, do you still get together with your brothers and your sister?

TRUMAN: Yes, once in a while.

ODUM-SOPER: For Christmas and things like that?

TRUMAN: Well, Martha Ann generally has us out there on . . . has a deal on Fourth of July, and I generally make that. Then I go over to Harry's periodically. In fact, Dorothy called me last week to come over Sunday, and I was already scheduled to go to Independence with my niece and her family. So we get together quite a little bit.

ODUM-SOPER: It sounds like you had a close family.

TRUMAN: It was. Of course, after Mother and Father were gone, it isn't there anymore. I see Audrey's family quite a bit, too. So we're still pretty close there.

WILLIAMS: Would you say you had a good life there on the farm?

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, yes, I did.

WILLIAMS: I like hearing about farm life because my grandparents and my mother grew up in Missouri on farms, and I never had much experience that way.

TRUMAN: Well, one day I think we had twenty-three head of horses and mules in the field.

WILLIAMS: You had 600 acres there?

TRUMAN: I griped that day because I had to drive three instead of four to a harrow.

ODUM-SOPER: It was a skill, wasn't it, to drive, to get them all working together?

TRUMAN: Well, you got to teach them. Father said that you oughtn't to hit them but once and make them remember it all day.

ODUM-SOPER: That's pretty hard! [chuckling]

TRUMAN: No, it isn't. He'd take a line that was about that wide, an inch and a quarter wide, and flip it and raise a knot on a mule's leg about an inch and a half in diameter and about a quarter of an inch or a half-inch high in one swipe, so a mule remembered it, and he didn't have to do that very often. But if you taught the mules to start with, they weren't any problem. We broke a team of two-year-old mules. Harry drove them. We'd work one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The first time we hooked them together, we hooked them to the walking plow and drug it across a concrete slab. It didn't bother them.

ODUM-SOPER: Didn't you raise sparks?

TRUMAN: Oh, well, yes, but it didn't bother the mules any. [chuckling] They didn't do anything.

ODUM-SOPER: Good row horses, it sounds like, or better. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Was your father a good teacher?

TRUMAN: Yes, he did pretty good. He made us work both . . . well, work left- and right-handed. One thing that used to gripe me, you asked some guy if he could scoop left-handed. He'd say, "Oh, yeah," and he'd come up and do it this way, scoop right-handed and throw over his left-hand shoulder. I'd say, "Get to the other end of the wagon," and I'd start scooping at that end. But I could scoop either way.

ODUM-SOPER: Did you share those chores, particularly haying, with your neighbors? Did everybody get together and do it?

TRUMAN: Well, not particularly haying, but we did threshing. But after they quit bringing the threshing crews around, why, you didn't do much sharing that way. But I've done quite a bit of haying and sticking the fork. When I was younger, why, I'd lead the, work the horse on the end of the rope, the hay rope. Then I finally got big enough that I had to stick the fork, you know, at the north end of a barn in summertime, and that's a hot job.

ODUM-SOPER: When you talked about leading a horse on a rope, though, what would you do? I don't know that.

TRUMAN: Well, a horse was tied to . . . you tie the rope to the single-tree and then you lead the horse out and he pulls the rope, tightens the rope. See, you've got a track in the barn with a carriage on it, and when you come back to the end

of the track, it trips it and the fork drops down and there's a rope double . . . two ropes there. And when the horse tightens it up, he lifts the hay off the wagon. When it hits the track, it clicks in and the carriage goes down the barn, and you get it in as far as you want it and holler at you, and you trip it, and the hay drops down, and somebody in there spreads it out a little bit. That's also a hot job.

WILLIAMS: How old were you before you started doing chores?

TRUMAN: [chuckling] Not very old.

WILLIAMS: Three or four maybe? [chuckling]

TRUMAN: Well, before I went to school I took Father his lunch. Mother would fix it, and I'd get on Speck and ride out someplace where he was working. Of course, I had a goat, and he got on top of the car and punched holes in the top, so we had to get rid of him.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a favorite chore?

TRUMAN: No, not really.

WILLIAMS: You wouldn't bargain with your brothers to trade or anything?

TRUMAN: No, we all did them.

WILLIAMS: I think that's all. Thank you.

TRUMAN: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW